Ashland Man Presents One Point On View of Federal Budget Size

(Editor's note: The author of the following article, C. L. Williams of Ashland, is a former employee of the Post Office department in Washington, D.C., where he assisted in preparation of Post Office budget estimates. From 1954 to 1956, he served as secretary of a national organization of retired civil employees. His article presents one point of view on the size of the federal budget, and of what citizens can do to keep check on it.)

By C. L. WILLIAMS

Why doesn't Congress put a stop to governmental waste and extravagance?

We all know it isn't doing so, and if we want confirmation—the best obtainable—we can get it from a 1952 report of one of the most powerful of all Congressional standing committees, the House Committee on Rules. That report says in part:

"The Congress under the present set-up is virtually at the mercy of the executive branch and its various bureaus."

"The result is that many millions of dollars have been appropriated in excess of the amounts actually needed properly to carry on the functions of the Federal Government."

Imbalance Cited

While the second-quoted paragraph mentions "the Federal Government," the first one leaves no doubt that the executive branch is the target. Still more impressive evidence of the existing imbalance among the three branches of government can be found in the President's 1958 Budget Message. It reveals that of all appropriated funds expended in 1956, the executive branch spent almost 99.8 per cent. The legislative and judicial branches together shared the remaining .2 of 1 per cent.

Nor can the difficulties of those in Congress who have to pass on requests for funds be adequately told by figures alone. To the increased size of such requests has been added a greatly enlarged complexity created by the expansion of the executive branch into a bewildering variety of technological fields. This expansion has brought to the government payrolls technical and professional experts by the thousands; and, inevitably, the requests for funds of these experts are couched in the technical terms of their particular specialties, in language with which the layman is all too often unfamiliar. The result is that the Congressman on an appropriations committee is not infrequently placed in the unhappy position of having to pass on the need for funds to initiate or maintain a project beyond the scope of his knowledge, argued for in terms he does not fully comprehend.

The dilemna of the appropriations committee members is well expressed in the House Rules Committee report, previously referred to:

" . . . the various Federal agencies are staffed with literally thousands of technical and fiscal experts. In contrast the Appropriations Committees (of the House and Senate) . . . are staffed with a mere handful of people, most of whom are necessarily limited to the performance of clerical duties."

"The Federal Government has grown so rapidly and has become so enormous and complex that it is impossible for the Congress, particularly in the field of appropriations, to operate efficiently with the same machinery that was set up at the beginning of the Republic . . . It is impossible for the Congress to operate in the atomic age with ox-cart machinery."

What To Do?

Faced with the prospect of a continued waste of his dollars, what then can the taxpayer do? He can, of course, always insist that his national legislators sharpen up the Congressional paring knives and lop off the fat from appropriation requests. But, in the light of what has been said, can he be sure that the Congress will always be able to distinguish the fat from the lean? Across-the-board percentage cuts have been tried, also, but they don't work well, either. To quote again from the Rules Committee report:

"Flat percentage cuts improperly affect in the same degree two entirely different kinds of agencies: (a) those whose officials are conducting constructive and useful activities in efficient, economical fashion, as against (b) those who are making no effort to do a good job."

It seems, then, quite useless to hope that the problem can be solved with a Congressional meataxe.

"Real Source"

Isn't it about time some thought was given to attacking the real source of the difficulty? Why not bring some pressure to bear upon the waster himself? He has to render an accounting for the money he spends, an accounting that is spread upon the public records for all to read who care to do so. It is a curious fact that we Americans seem little disposed to hold the head of an executive department (or independent agency) directly responsible for unwise spending. Instead, we prefer to lay the blame upon our Senators and Represenatives.

The truth is that most of us know very little about how our tax money is being spent. Once we have met the tax collector's demands, we're glad to forget the whole unpleasant business. And what could be sweeter for the waster?

There is not need for us to remain in ignorance of Federal government spending and operations. Government bulletins, manuals, treatises, reports, pamphlets and documents of all kinds flow from the presses of the Government Printing Office in an unending stream; and there are few aspects, indeed, of the national government that they do not tell about in great detail. If we'd spend on these documents a small share of the time we devote to the sports pages of our favorite newspaper, we could pinpoint the waster and blast him from office.

Anybody got a better idea?

Partial Eclipse Will Be Visible in Area April 29

By FAY BONTLEY

The continued cloudiness of recent weeks has been more than a bit disappointing. I had hoped so much for clear skies during Mercury's sojourn in the western heavens but though the day might be sunny, by early evening, clouds invariably shrouded the location of the "winged messenger."

Through breaks in the sky's dark covering, Mercury was visible on three different evenings and although I've observed it many times in the past, this was the brightest appearance it has been my privilege to enjoy.

Having the smallest and the largest planet in the sky at the same time proved an interesting feature. Though Mercury was obscured there would sometimes be a clear or nearly clear patch of sky in the southeast and Jupiter, mightiest of all the planets, would shine with a non-twinkling, steady light.

Too Near Sun

Mercury is now too near the sun for observation, but Jupiter will be visible (given clear skies) during the weeks of spring and summer.

By 8 p.m., it is high in the southeastern heavens, but is gradually moving westward. By the first of June it will be high in the southwest at 8 p.m. and by July 1, darkness will reveal the "king of planets" to be in the southwest about midway between the horizon and the overhead point.

On the celestial agenda for April in addition to stars, planets, and a comet, there is an eclipse of the sun. On April 29, the earth's nearest neighbor in the havens reaches the new moon phase or "dark of the moon" as it is sometimes called, and will travel directly between the earth and the sun producing a solar eclipse.

Partial Eclipse

However, only a partial eclipse will be visible in northwestern North America. Approximately one-tenth of the sun's area is all that will be darkened by the moon's shadow, even at mid-eclipse. But, even so, this will prove interesting to many observers.

The black "bite" will begin to show at 5:15 p.m. (PST) when the shadow of the moon starts encroaching on the face of the sun, and will continue to grow until 5:43 p.m. when it will have attained maximum size, covering about one-tenth of the sun's disc.

From that moment the shadow will begin to recede as the moon moves on its orbit. The "bite" will grow smaller and smaller, disappearing entirely about 6:10 p.m.

Serious Injury

Looking directly into the sun may result in serious injury to the eyes and great caution should always be exercised in this matter. Dark glasses or old negatives may be used to subdue the sun's glare.

A shade over a window with a western exposure may be pierced with a small hole causing a pinhole image of the sun to be shown on the wall opposite the window. The dark shadow or "bite" can be observed in the reflection on the wall.

If a white screen is placed behind the eyepiece of a telescope fixed on the sun, the solar image will appear on the screen, thus enabling a number of people to observe the phenomenon at the same time.

During the year of 1957 there will be four eclipses; two of the moon and two of the sun. Disappointing enough, only the partial solar eclipse of April 29, and the beginning of the lunar eclipse listed for the early morning of Nov. 7, 1957, will be visible from this part of the world.

The University of South Dakota now has 17 third generation students.

NEEDS A LIFT

Atlanta —(U.P.)— Fifteen minutes late for an appointment, city elevator inspector Nelson T. Yancey explained he had been trapped in a stalled, self-service elevator.

SCENE NOT HEARD

Pittsburgh —(U.P.)— Five-year-old Ruth Ann Fuchs slipped out of the house for a stroll Friday without a stitch of clothing. Ruth Ann lives on Plainview Street.

The Family Council

Editor's note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, a women's editor and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual report. The Family Council does not give advice; it merely reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

Patricia D.—I am investing in our lifetime home

Clifford D.—She is trying to keep up with her rich sister.

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Patricia D.—My husband and I are both in our mid-20s and have been married three years. We have no children yet.

When we were first married, we had very little money and started out in a furnished apartment. We could just about manage our food and rent bills. Since then, we've both been quite lucky in going on to better jobs and are making good pay. There is every reason to believe that our income will greatly increase in the next ten years.

I have been buying some good clothes and fine things for our home. I never had these things as a child, but I have good taste and I like expensive things. My husband says I am splurging and wants me "to go easy on the money." He thinks we ought to save, but I feel I am investing in our lifetime home. We have had very bitter arguments about the whole thing and I am beginning to think we just don't share the same values.

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Clifford D.—We used to be so much happier before we had any money. The only recreation we could afford was walking and talking together and that was fun. Now I never really see Pat. She is always busy shopping and all she ever talks about is clothes and what she is going to buy next.

I feel that Pat is trying to keep up with her rich sister. After every visit to her sister's home, she comes back depressed and brooding. Then she goes out and buys a fantastically expensive lamp or piece of silver. We'll never have the kind of money her sister and brother-in-law have because they are in business and we only have our jobs to depend on. When we have children, Pat's job will be gone and there will only be my salary.

Pat thinks I'm just a boor and don't appreciate the finer things in life, but I don't see any sense in training your eyes to be bigger than your pocketbook.

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The Council: Nobody can tell Pat and Clifford how much they ought to spend on clothes and home furnishings. Only they can judge the potentialities of their income and only they can decide what things are most important to them. Pat's expensive lamp may bring her more happiness than a vacation trip, but she should realize that her husband is right about the fact that a salaried person must impose limitations on himself, and she will have to make sacrifices for her "good taste." Pat should also realize that good taste does not always require a high financial outlay. With effort and imagination it is possible to indulge in good taste without emptying the cupboard. From Clifford's account, it would appear that Pat has made the common mistake of seeing beauty in only the expensive. There is no end to this "conspicuous consumption" and if Pat continues to use her sister's buying as her guide, she cooms herself to frustration.

Pat should also depend less on material things for her happiness. It may be that it is she, rather than Clifford, who lacks appreciation for "the finer things in life."

On the other hand, Clifford snould realize things that may seem extravagant to a man may be almost a necessity to a woman. A woman's clothes and her home are usually the main expressions of her personality and he should not impose more restrictions on her than necessary.

4-H CLUB NEWS

Eagle Point Outdoor Living, Cooking Club

The meeting of the Eagle Point Outdoor Living and Cooking club was held April 20 at the home of James Wert. President Ann Higday took charge of the meeting.

The club's April 26 pie social was the discussion topic. George Barr of Alber's Feed and Seed was suggested as auctioneer for the event.

Jim Ackerman,
Acting Reporter.

A LENGTHY 'VISIT'

Chicago —(U.P.)— Anthony McGauley, 55, is convinced his wife is never coming back. McGauley sued for divorce Thursday on the ground that he has waited long enough for the return of his bride who never came back from a "visit" to Scotland 29 years ago.